



In today's Navy, women account for more than 65 percent of the enlisted legal workforce – making the legal community the one with the highest percentage of women in any Navy rate, said Sharon Anderson, public affairs specialist for Chief of Naval Personnel.

At the helm of the legal community, for the first time, is a female Judge Advocate General (JAG) of the Navy – Vice Adm. Nanette M. DeRenzi.

DeRenzi was born in Philadelphia, raised in Pennsauken, N. J., and graduated magna cum laude from Villanova University in 1983. She commissioned through the JAG Corps Student Program and, in 1986, graduated from the Temple University School of Law. She later earned a Masters of Law degree from the George Washington University School of Law.

"I never felt I had hurdles to overcome as a woman," said DeRenzi. "The Navy gave me every opportunity to succeed, and the bosses I worked for didn't treat me differently. They accepted my advice, I worked hard to be a good counselor for them, and I think my experience – which is positive overall – says as much about the Navy as it might say about me."

Carl Vinson's JAG, Lt. Cmdr. Michele V. Rosen, has had an experience similar to DeRenzi, and credited both men and women for empowering female Sailors to serve.

"There have been many people, men and women, who have paved the way for greater opportunities for women in the Navy and military service," said Rosen. "I have only been in the Navy for about 10 years, but in that short time, new opportunities have been afforded to women."

Aptly timed, Rear Adm. Ken Perry, commander of Submarine Group Two and head of the Enlisted Women in Submarines Task Force, recently announced the Navy's plan to integrate enlisted women into the Submarine Force in 2016.

The Navy's dedication to further service opportunities for women has made a positive impression on Legalman 1st Class (SW/AW) Melika Frazier, Legal Department's leading petty officer on board Carl Vinson, who has witnessed a number of

changes over her nearly 20-year career.

Frazier, who was born and raised in Vidalia, Ga., joined the Navy as a lithographer's mate immediately after graduating high school in 1995. She reported to her first ship in 1996, cross-rated to legalman in 2000, and arrived aboard Carl Vinson, her third carrier and fourth ship overall, in 2012.

"We've come a long way since I joined the Navy," Frazier said. "Back then, as a woman, you had to do so much more than your male counterparts were doing. Now, I'm not hindered in any way by my gender. I've been able to thrive in the Navy. It's been easy to feel accepted and respected by my male counterparts."

Frazier says Carl Vinson's legal department, with exclusively female E-6 and below legalmen, is not normal. Still, she acknowledges that a higher percentage of women serve in her community than men, but the opportunity to serve in the legalman community is available to all.

Legalman 1st Class Sarah Trejo also converted to legalman after joining the Navy.

"I have always had an interest in law and when I saw how that was applied within the Navy, I thought it would be a good move. I have an inquisitive mind and it drove me," said Trejo.

Carl Vinson currently has two Sailors waiting on conversion approval to legalman – both male. Aviation Maintenance Administrationman 2nd Class Benjamin Holmes and Aviation Boatswain's Mate (Handling) 2nd Class Kenneth Harris will depart Carl Vinson for Legalman "A" School in Newport, R.I., if selected for the rate.

The Navy's senior legal expert, DeRenzi, has the same advice for Holmes and Harris as she does for Frazier and Trejo.

"Have a goal, set goals and work hard to meet them," said DeRenzi. "Never forget that job number one is just doing your job. It's about shared sacrifice; do the job the Navy has given to you. Be a mentor no matter your rank; we all have the chance to be role models." ▼